

PHARMACOLOGY. By R.G. Penn. Third Edition. (Pp 320, Figs 22. £4.75). London: Bailliere Tindall, 1980.

THIS is the third edition of a small textbook of pharmacology and supercedes the previous edition which was published six years ago. There are four introductory chapters on "general pharmacology" followed by chapters which describe the effects of drugs on each body system. The chapters on general pharmacology contain insufficient information to be of value to students without reference to other textbooks; in particular the section on pharmacokinetics does not take into account the great advances in this subject in recent years and their importance in therapeutics. There is no mention of the value of the measurement of plasma drug concentrations. The chapters on systematic pharmacology contain much more useful information which is clearly presented but occasionally there is inadequate information about newer drugs, e.g., cimetidine and beta adrenoceptor blocking drugs. The effects of drugs in man is generally poorly described and the pharmacokinetics of drugs is rarely included. Although the therapeutic indications for the use of many of the drugs is mentioned, their use in the treatment of disease is not covered in sufficient detail to be of any real value. This book may be of value to pharmacy students although it may not contain sufficient information to be used as a single textbook. Although the author did not intend his book to be a "therapeutic handout", its appeal to medical students would have been considerably improved by increasing its content of clinical pharmacology. Consequently the book may be of little value to medical students except where pharmacology is taught and examined as a separate subject, or in conjunction with a textbook of clinical pharmacology or therapeutics.

The book could be improved by the inclusion at the end of each chapter of a bibliography as a guide to further reading. Although there is a list of reference books at the end of the book, this could have been supplemented by a statement that excellent reviews on many aspects of pharmacology appear in many specialist journals.

R.G.S.

LAWTON AND FOY'S TEXTBOOK FOR MEDICAL ASSISTANTS. By M. Murray Lawton, Donald F. Foy, Lowell I. Thomas and Victor Schramke. Fourth Edition. (Pp 460. £13.50). St. Louis, Toronto, London: The C.V. Mosby Company, 1980.

THIS lengthy book defines in detail the learning needs of a new type of health care professional in America, known as a Medical Assistant. The aim of training is clearly to enhance status. The individual meets the many needs of the busy clinician in his office setting. Like a chameleon the trained professional will act as nurse, counsellor, technician, receptionist and practice manager. The multipurpose role defined therein is at variance with specialisation and role differentiation within the well developed medical care team approach in the British National Health Service, also with its hierarchial system of control between different health and social workers. The detailed learning requirements in the clinical practice sections of the book would be more appropriate in Britain to the training programmes of doctors, nurses, or laboratory technicians. The chapters on business practices are relevant only in an American context. The book makes interesting reading in a cultural sense but there is little of practical value for the British reader. There is an associated Workbook for Medical Assistants by different authors, for use with it, which is reviewed separately.

W.G.I.

WORKBOOK FOR MEDICAL ASSISTANTS. By Miriam G. Austrin, Charlotte M. Chance and Nancy A. Riecken Snodgrass. (Pp 197. £8.25). St. Louis, Toronto, London: The C.V. Mosby Company, 1980.

THE workbook is for use in conjunction with Lawton and Foy's Textbook for Medical Assistants, which on review is of little value to British readers. It may have some educational interest in that it illustrates the use of multiple choice questions, fill in and short answer questions as methods of course assessments to meet the clearly defined learning needs of Lawton and Foy's textbook.

W.G.I.